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Margate in England and Coney Island in the United States are the locations for my long term, coastal-based photographic practice. The tintype process makes a significant contribution to this work, reflecting my growing ambivalence with contemporary photographic digitisation and the often lack of material printed images. In comparison to digital production, the tintype can appear labour-intensive, where for all its intentional and unintentional faults a singular object - held as much as seen - is created. On these humble ferro plates the fingerprints of the maker, the dust from the location, the imperfections caused by the chemicals reacting unpredictably to the environment remain fixed. For me, this obsolete process knowingly provides imperfect, handmade renditions of the subject matter, a characteristic that seems particularly appropriate in representing the fragility, and at times fractured, environment of coastal towns.

Seaside resorts are historically cyclical in their popularity and from the 1970s both Margate and Coney Island suffered from a lack of economic investment and tourist interest. As a result, these coastal communities became hardened and remain prone to fickle change and broken promises. Where upward turns are once again evident, these are perhaps signified best as repair rather than simplistic regeneration or renaissance. Buildings and redundant commercial premises are being restored, signage repainted and owners prepare optimistically for a successful new season. Yet such coastal repairs also have the connotation of vulnerability and fragility, a sutured wound of under investment, all too prone to breach and it is this threat of rupture, which proves so photographically interesting.

This community, commercial and cultural repair is arguably most visible on the seafront. It is here that the arcades, theme parks and cafes are located. These are the seaside attractions, the entry point where the town generates income from day-trippers and holidaymakers. Literally and metaphorically placed at the edge.

Like other seaside attractions, the tintype has its own rich history at the edge. Prior to the pocket camera becoming ubiquitous it was the tintype that provided cheap, instant photographs for seaside visitors. For just a small fee beachgoers could take home a tintype souvenir as record of their visit. Numerous photography studios populated Margate's seafront and Coney Island's boardwalk, capitalizing on the demand for mementos and seaside ephemera. Both places also willingly reference this past in the present, Dreamland in Margate reopened as a Heritage Amusement Park in 2015 and Coney Island's unique past is constantly referenced and rebranded. My own practice too seeks to evidence this past, but in dialogue with the present; the obsolescence of the esoteric tintype used knowingly.

I make use of the tintype's inherent insensitivity, with the resultant long exposures leaving mere traces of people within each frame. Here the iconic Coney' and Margate rides: the Parachute Jump, Scenic Railway, Cyclone and Wonder Wheel all appear devoid of passengers. Deceptively empty, yet the riders are there invisibly ingrained within the image. Fairground rides dominate, looming large over the coastalscapes, omnipresent, watching and twisting, monuments to the machine age, enduring the seaside's birth/rebirth, rupture/repair. Each tintype makes strange this complex coastal actuality, flipping ride and midway stall signage, rendering text peculiar due to the medium's lateral reversal. Tintypes, like Coney's boardwalk, interweave the stark reality of

experience with the fantasy lands of amusement parks and these coastal locations present a culture that is messy, free, and at the edges undefined.

These contemporary tintypes like constructed seaside resorts, are at once real and unreal. There is an inescapable veracity to a coastal community whilst, paradoxically, its chief offer is often escapism. As Henry Miller said of Coney Island 'The world has become a mystic maze erected by a gang of carpenters during the night. Everything is a lie, a fake' (Miller, 1974).¹

¹ Miller. H, Black Spring, Panther Books, 1974, p.138